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The State of the TRC

by Douglas Kaufman, TRC Chair
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It's time again for the TRC Chairman to summarize where we've been this past year and look ahead to the future of the organization and the game. Surprisingly enough, this is actually a part of the TRC charter! So here goes.

This Past Year

Obviously this was a huge year for the TRC, containing possibly the biggest (and most unexpected) event we'll ever witness. Through dint of effort, constant nagging, or just plain élan, we somehow convinced WotC that it would be a good idea to publish *new* **Netrunner** cards! If you haven't already patted yourself on the back for this truly mind-boggling contribution, do so now. Every member of the TRC (and then some) deserves a huge round of applause. And, of course, our special thanks to Jennifer Clarke Wilkes, without whom it can truly be said that this would not have happened. *Mazel tov*, Jennifer!

But stunningly, that wasn't all we accomplished in 1999. The Revised Format committee also convened, saw, and conquered (depending on your perspective) and brought forth a small, concise, and useful list of bans and errata. I for one applaud their efforts. Small steps are always best, and they started with a minimalist approach that I think will still have a profound—and *good*—effect on the playing environment. Along with all this, as if it weren't enough, the TRC weathered personnel changes without self-destructing, and generally exhibited reasonably good taste on the listserv; in short, for a fan club, we've been astoundingly mature. Add it all together, and I must say that the TRC is the finest organization I've ever had the pleasure to work with.

The Next Year

We must also realize that there are some things we failed to accomplish, and look for ways to make them happen in 2000—the last year of the second millenium. There's been a general lack of organization (and de facto I'm the one at fault) at the day-to-day level, which we hope to cure this coming year. Our website will get beautiful, be maintained, and contain useful and current information. Our rules guru will be appointed and will start to issue rulings on some of the burning questions from the list. Our rankings system will get standardized and the people who've been doing the work gratis and without any kudos will... well, at least they'll start getting kudos. And per the DCI's own request, the Format Committee will reconvene soon and begin Round II of possible changes to the tournament environment (don't panic, they won't go into effect for at least 2 months).

Along with generally getting things more organized and professional, we should look to what major goals we'd like to accomplish this year. I would like to see Project Dioscuri revitalized, and possibly published by WotC this year. In addition, I'd like to see at least one major Constructed event this year with a substantial prize of some kind. And surely, if it's at all possible, we'd *all* like to see another set of *Classic* be released.

I would everyone who reads this to take a few minutes to think of some major goal for the TRC. Please feel free to send me email about your idea, and about any other complaints or kudos you may have about the organization. We're waiting to hear from you! And once again, congratulations to one and all for a very, very, very successful 1999.

Shalom,
Doug Kaufman "Rabbi Small",
TRC Chairman

State of the Corp—December 1999

by Jennifer Clarke Wilkes
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What can I say? Just in time for Christmas, every **Netrunner** fan's dream has come true at last. Welcome to the new millennium, **Netrunner** *Classic*! The worldwide prerelease series suffered some unfortunate problems, but despite that we saw turnout far higher than that of this spring's World Domination qualifiers. Interest in the game certainly is on the rise again—just check the number of subscribers to Netrunner-l. Once again I want to thank all of the fans who worked so hard to keep the flame alive. You all deserve this.

But we can't take things for granted. If we don't keep up the interest and increase the player base, there will be no incentive to support this game. The Classic expansion will be seen as a "bone" for the fans, and Netrunner will again languish without official promotion. So keep teaching, putting on events, and of course buying *Classic*! I for one have already put in an order for a couple of cases, and visions of Rent-I-Cons are dancing in my head.

The new millennium will also see a new dedicated manager for all of the Classic games, Mr. Ryan Miller. He's energetic and excited about supporting these games, and I am looking forward to working with him in the new year. My goal is to get a second mini-expansion set in 2000. But we'll all have to work to make this happen.

But for now, it's play time! I'm off to make that Gypsy deck. . .

All hail the new cards!

by Jens Kreutzer
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The Finals of this year's World Domination are over, and as you can read in Lukas' report on page 2, we have a new **Netrunner** World Champion! However, it is not only Byron Bailey who has something to celebrate, but all players—the new **Netrunner** *Classic*™ expansion has arrived in time for Christmas, and on this side of the millenium! Not all Gridlock III tourney organizers got their cards in time for the *Classic* prerelease tourneys on Nov 12-14, but some made do with proxy cards, and everybody who was able to play had a splendid time. **Netrunner** as a game has received an infusion of Bodyweight™ Synthetic Blood, as is shown by a remarkable tournament participation and a threefold increase of traffic on the Netrunner-l discussion list: Introducing interesting new game mechanics like sleepy ice and "double" cards, *Classic* is already being hotly discussed. Sealed-Deck winners like Self-Destruct, as well as the "fat Bartmoss" Rent-I-Con, will surely influence **Netrunner** strategies and tactics. Just how weighty (or silent) the impact of *Classic* is going to be will be shown in the first Constructed tournaments using the new expansion, which we all can look forward to. Merry Christmas to everybody, and happy deck testing beneath the mistletoe!

World Domination 1999 Results

by Lukas Kautzsch
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The finals of this year's **Netrunner** World Championships are over: Three rounds of Sealed Deck and three rounds of Unlimited Constructed were completed in seven weeks' time, with all 24 matches really played (no forfeits, no drop-outs), as is to be expected from the final stage of such an event.

Final rankings of the Sealed Deck tournament:

1. Ocke Rörden (GER)	7.0 GMP, 17.5 Opponents' GMP
2. Byron Bailey (USA)	7.0 GMP, 14.0 Opponents' GMP
3. Richard Cripe (USA)	5.5 GMP
4. Holger Janssen (GER)	5.0 GMP
5. Philip Harvey (UK)	4.0 GMP
6. David Bartholow (USA)	3.5 GMP
7. Scott Dickie (USA)	3.0 GMP
8. Jens Kreutzer (GER)	1.0 GMP

Final rankings of the Unlimited Constructed tournament:

1. Byron Bailey (USA)	8.0 GMP
2. David Bartholow (USA)	6.0 GMP, 18.0 Opponents' GMP
3. Richard Cripe (USA)	6.0 GMP, 13.0 Opponents' GMP
4. Holger Janssen (GER)	4.0 GMP
5. Ocke Rörden (GER)	3.0 GMP, 14.0 Opponents' GMP 26-46 AP
Scott Dickie (USA)	3.0 GMP, 14.0 Opponents' GMP 24-44 AP
7. Jens Kreutzer (GER)	3.0 GMP, 13.0 Opponents' GMP
8. Philip Harvey (UK)	3.0 GMP, 9.0 Opponents' GMP

Combined rankings:

1. Byron Bailey (USA)	15.0 GMP
2. Richard Cripe (USA)	11.5 GMP
3. Ocke Rörden (GER)	10.0 GMP
4. David Bartholow (USA)	9.5 GMP
5. Holger Janssen (GER)	9.0 GMP
6. Philip Harvey (UK)	7.0 GMP
7. Scott Dickie (USA)	6.0 GMP
8. Jens Kreutzer (GER)	4.0 GMP

This means that Byron Bailey is **Netrunner** World Champion 1999. Congrats! At least Richard Cripe and Ocke Rörden are qualified for next year's second round as well (with details to be determined by the WD 2000 Committee). Here is a statistical overview of the kind of decks that were played in the Constructed Finals round:

WD '99 Finals Constructed Decks:

CORP

6 Corp War Tag 'n' Bag
4 Artificial Security Directors/Corp War
3 Tycho Extension fast advancement
3 Greyhound Demolition Derby
2 Fetal AI
2 Rent-to-Own
1 AI Chief Financial Officer/Employee Empowerment + Surprise
1 Tycho Extension Tag 'n' Bag
1 Braindance/Data Fort Reclamation fast advancement
1 Employee Empowerment fast advancement

RUNNER

5 Preying Mantis/Poisoned Water Supply/Emergency Self-Construct (no-run Bad Publicity)
4 Precision Bribery/Time to Collect
4 R&D Protocol Files/Microtech AI Interface (plus HQ Attack)
3 TagMe with R&D Protocol Files/Microtech AI Interface
2 Big Dig
1 Ice Destruction, R&D Protocol Files/Microtech AI Interface (plus HQ Attack)
1 R&D Protocol Files/Technician Lover with bonus AP cards (Hot Tip for WNS etc.)
1 Moles plus Synchronized Attack on HQ
1 TagMe, R&D Protocol Files with Scaldan
1 TagMe, Rush Hour
1 TagMe, HQ Attack Bit Denial (Priority Wreck, Taxman)

All in all it was a high-class event, especially in Sealed where everybody seemed to know what they were doing. Some players proved that they lacked experience with Unlimited Constructed (or possibly only with the decks they used). Not everybody was happy with the amount of "cheese" encountered, but several of those matches were still interesting—if only at the beginning. And the goal of this event was to become World Champion, not to get a prize for innovation. The match log files and the Constructed decklists are available at the WD '99 homepage (`http://web.system.ptv.de/lk/nr/Finals.htm`).

Many thanks to the people who made it all possible by judging some of the IRC matches. In the Finals these were: Jason Erdmann, Tobin Lopes, Byron Massey, Jeff Sutherland and Holger Janssen (the very last match, which didn't have any influence on his own result). In IRC Europe (WD '99 round 1) The Mysterious Kiran (Patel) was an invaluable help, as was Tim Guillette, who organized the first part of IRC America. And don't we forget the organizers and judges of WDQ and WD round 1 meatspace tournaments—thanks to you all!

It was a huge task and I'm happy that it is done now and worked out so nicely at the end. I apologize for all inconveniences and the huge delays in WD '99 round 1. Please give all your support to the organizer(s) of World Domination 2000 (where I will be allowed to *play* again finally...)!

Yours, Lukas Kautzsch

"Elementary, My Dear Wilson!"
Famous Netrunner Stacks
#5: The Rent-to-Own Deck

by Jens Kreutzer
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Really heavy ice like Mastiff, Liche, Wall of Ice, or, since the advent of the *Proteus*™ expansion, Colonel Failure and Toughonium™ Wall, have always made a Corp player's eyes shine. Be it for psychological intimidation alone, having a rezzed Colonel on the table can surely make the Corp's day. But normally the high-end ice doesn't see action all that frequently, because of its equally high rez cost. Speed is of the essence these days, and if the Corp manages to amass enough bits to rez a Colonel, they are usually better invested in a fast-advancement operation to go for the victory. Ice just slows the Runner down and protects only one fort (disregarding *Classic*'s Glacier), which means that the investment is not likely to be worth it, especially if you take Pile Driver and Big Frackin' Gun into account—or Remote Detonator, for that matter.

Proteus, however, has given us a feasible method to rez ice for free, no matter how high the rez cost might be, namely the operation Rent-to-Own Contract (RTOC), which costs 0 bits to play and reads:

*Rez a piece of **ice**, at no cost. Put on that **ice** a number of Term counters equal to its rez cost. At the start of each of your turns, if you have at least 2 bits, lose 2 bits and remove one of these Term counters; otherwise, put a Term counter on that piece of **ice**.*

This free rezzing of ice therefore comes with a considerable drawback: A number of Term counters equal to the rez cost has to be paid off by the Corporation, which means that in effect (one counter being priced at 2 bits) we pay double the usual price for the ice. This should even be less advisable financially than rezzing it in the normal way—who has 34 bits to spare for a single Colonel Failure, after all? But a radical strategy takes advantage of the one loophole RTOC offers: A Corporation that is broke (i. e., has no more than 1 bit in its pool at the start of its turns) cannot be made to pay off its contracts. A Corp player who abandons the idea of ever being rich again can thus abuse RTOC with impunity. Term counters will amass to ridiculous numbers during such games, but as long as the Corp never intends to lose them, it couldn't care less. Just rez ice as big and mean as you can imagine in your wildest dreams, without ever wasting a thought on paying off all of those debts.

In a Rent-to-Own deck, we will need about 18 pieces of our heaviest ice, and maybe as many as 12 Rent-to-Own Contracts to rez enough of them. The first couple of turns will be spent icing HQ and R&D (maybe Archives too, if we suspect that the Runner might be using Shredder Uplink Protocol) and at least one subsidiary data fort (SDF). Our initial 5 bits quickly vanish to the Contracts, but after we are down to 1 or 0 bits, they won't bother us anymore. Unfortunately, this also means that without special measures (like hiring Chester Mix or including Efficiency Experts), four ice is as deep as we will ever get: Starting our turn with 1 bit in pool, we can take 2 bits with our first two actions and then spend all 3 to install a fourth ice layer. But then, this usually suffices—and in any case, the sheer time it takes to do all of this installing and rezzing with RTOC usually limits ice layers to two deep on the central data forts and three deep on the SDF in the average game.

What strategies are there for a Corp that is protected by the toughest ice in the game, but doesn't have any money? First of all, it should use down-to-earth agendas. Since costly fast-advancement operations or nodes are out of the question, agendas will have to be advanced "by hand". That in itself means that scoring one will take at least two turns, but in addition, there are big problems in generating enough bits even to pay for the advancement counters. All that we can manage in two turns is a 3-difficulty agenda. To avoid having to score more than three agendas in this excruciating way, the wise CEO's choice is Corporate War, the only 3-difficulty agenda that is worth 3 agenda points. Its drawback (lose all bits when it is scored with less than 12 bits in pool) is of no importance, because there are never any bits to be lost anyway. But Corporate Wars are a liability when faced with Terrorist Reprisal; since we don't really need all 9 agenda points, we might consider other 3-difficulty agendas like Marine Arcology (for an improved bit influx), Corporate Downsizing (to relieve an agenda-cramped HQ), or Security Purge (to speed up ice installation) in combination with Corp War. However, these make us include more agenda cards in our deck than necessary, being worth only 2 agenda points each.

The second consideration is that huge ice is the only protection that stands between the Runner and every agenda we want to score. Agendas will always be in danger of being stolen for at least one Runner turn—and if the Runner realizes what's going on, he or she needs only to collect enough bits to breach the SDF and wait. RTO's greatest weakness is its predictability: Since all of the ice is rezzed beforehand, the Runner knows exactly how many bits will be needed to break through. A common Corp strategy is therefore to double this little equation by installing a Bizarre Encryption Scheme in the SDF, which forces the Runner to run twice (and pay twice the cost) to score the agenda. If all else fails, the Corp must be prepared to sacrifice an agenda to make the Runner broke, hoping that he or she won't gain enough bits in time to grab the next. Off-Site Backups are often included in Rent-to-Own decks to get back trashed Encryption Schemes and to recycle RTOCs if not enough of them turn up by themselves. The following is a very basic RTO deck without any fancy gimmicks:

6	**Corporate War**
12	**Rent-to-Own Contract**
3	**Off-Site Backups**
6	**Bizarre Encryption Scheme**
10	**Colonel Failure**
4	**Toughonium™ Wall**
4	**Haunting Inquisition**

All of the rare ice cards can be substituted by others you might have, like Liche, Cerberus, Mastiff, or even Mazer and Rock Is Strong if you're really in a pinch. Watch out for cards that specifically target black ice, however: Anonymous Tip or Simulacrum can truly ruin your day if you play with Liche; with Colonels, you don't have this problem. The biggest challenge will likely be to collect 12 RTOCs, which are notoriously hard to find. Put in as many as you have, replace the rest with Off-Site Backups and hope for a good draw.

One or two Rent-to-Own decks are seen in almost every Constructed tourney at the time, and a Runner must surely take this into account when designing a strategy. The basic RTO concept can easily be expanded into more sophisticated strategies; Vapor Ops, for example, is a nice card to complement the theme as a "must-trash" node that lessens the danger to vulnerable agendas. Efficiency Experts raise the bit "ceiling" considerably and might be

a nasty surprise for the Runner; Night Shift yields bits and speeds up the deck. Rio de Janeiro City Grid is another card to consider. Experiment until you find a good strategy that is playable and fun.

When faced with the decision whether to play a RTO deck in a tourney, take the "metagame" into account. RTO really is in trouble when it has to face its arch-enemies Pile Driver and Big Frackin' Gun (and Terrorist Reprisal or Corporate Ally), but if you expect heavy use of Bartmoss Memorial Icebreaker in the upcoming tourney, RTO is a good idea, since it really shines against Bartmoss stacks. An ice-destruction stack will also have a hard time against RTO if the Corp sees to it that all ice is rezzed the turn it is installed; make sure to detect this Runner strategy early on, though. Runners who don't run SDFs for agenda but instead make only a few multi-access runs on central forts (like The Big Dig), or those who play a game only against time but not the Corp proper (like Masochism Rules), will also be tough on the rather slow and unwieldy RTO deck. Like already hinted at above, a Shredder Uplink Protocol also presents a danger to RTO decks, since building a double ice layer on the Archives as a countermeasure slows the Corp down considerably.

All in all, be aware that RTO gives away its strategy to the Runner only too readily, which means that the Corp loses much of the surprise potential that normally keeps the Runner on his or her toes. The only option tactically is to remain generally passive behind the tremendous ice barriers and hope that the Runner will be stopped short by them. There is not much room for experiment or adaptation during play, but still, a RTO deck can be a formidable opponent.

Emails to the Editor: *Bozomatic* Revisited

by Daniel Schneider
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Daniel Schneider, current German **Netrunner** Champion, was kind enough to send me a few comments concerning the last installment of "Famous Stacks", which was about Dennis Duncan's strategy "Bozomatic". In the following, you can read a translation of Daniel's thoughts and my responses to them.

Daniel: I thought (once more) that the article on "Bozomatic" was not comprehensive enough, although the topic was a bit more interesting in comparison to PB/TTC or Psycho Tycho. But then, I have high standards. The introduction and motivation for the article were very good. However, I'd like to make the following remarks/suggestions:

1) If I were you, I'd have explained "It is slow" more precisely. You list the cards that are part of the Runner setup, but I'd make it clearer just how *expensive* all of this is: The 'breaker suite at 18 bits, five Clowns at another 20 bits, plus MUs for about 10 bits; that's 48 bits already, without any cards for a winning strategy or defense! But even if you can pay for this installation, why is the stack still slow? The answer: Because you don't seek out your 'breakers but install them as you draw them, and because there is only one of each type. Running without a sentry 'breaker is too risky if you are short on protection cards while having a small hand size and valuable cards you cannot afford to lose—and it can happen that you install the sentry 'breaker last, only after seven or nine turns!

Even if you are able to draw and install the 'breakers in a quick and optimized way, you cannot run without the Clowns and the rest of the setup, because the 'breakers are too expensive to power up and the danger of taking damage (e. g., from a TRAP!) is too high. Therefore, Bozomatic is almost *always* slow, no matter what your initial draw is like!

Ed.: I did briefly mention the high cost of the setup and the risk involved in early running, but you accurately pointed out some deeper reasons for the deck's inherent slowness.

Daniel: 2) I wondered what you meant when you wrote that the drawing speed was "maximized" with Jack'n'Joe (JNJ) instead of with Bodyweight™ Synthetic Blood (BSB), because that is not true. With a good bit engine, BSB is faster than JNJ. So, why use JNJ? Because the second central thought with Bozomatic (next to the idea of building a stack that in principle consists only of programs) was to dispense with the need of bit generation altogether! I thought that this should have been stressed more. After all, it's not just that Zetatech Software Installers are used to install all programs, but also:

— daemons are used instead of mem chips
— Dennis dispensed with hand-size increasers
— because unlike BSB, JNJ is free (and without hand size increasers, Dennis would overload his hand with BSB anyway)
— because his winning strategy doesn't need any bits ("delivery of virus counters while running for free").

Ed.: Thank you for pointing this out. With "maximized", I meant "made as fast as possible, while taking into account the 0-bit-cost philosophy of the deck", but I probably should have made that clearer. I was of course aware of the existence of BSB and its ability in comparison to JNJ, just to reassure you. :-)

Daniel: 3) I somehow had the feeling that you didn't take Toughonium™ Wall into account, which is a piece of ice with strength 7 that is widely used and commonly encountered. Another twist with Bozomatic is, to wit, that you normally (without special enhancements) get by with strength 6 versus sentries and 'gates, but need strength 7 versus walls!

Ed.: Oops! You are absolutely right—this hadn't occured to me. So, with walls, you indeed have to expect ice with up to strength 7. My bad.

Daniel: 4) Have you taken a closer look at the strength issue, then? Like you said in the introduction, the 'breaker suite consists of "0-to-break" icebreakers and a certain number of Clowns. But what are the reasons for the selection Dennis Duncan made? Wouldn't it be a lot cheaper to take six instead of five Clowns while substituting Wild Card for Forward's Legacy, Codecracker for Wizard's Book and perhaps even Jackhammer for Wrecking Ball, like you correctly hinted at in the beginning?

5) For what reasons have the other cards been included in "HyperClown"? One could analyze the strange-looking mixture of Imp, Afreet, and Succubus for a start. And wherefore *two* Joan of Arc, for example? Isn't that a luxury, if you have to manage without other very important cards (i. e., damage protection)? These are just a couple of thoughts that occured to me.

Ed.: To be honest, my intention was mainly to showcase Dennis' stack, not to interpret it in detail. I am, however, quite impressed by your insights, and although I cannot answer your questions at this point (we'd have to ask Dennis himself, I'd say), they might spark a discussion. If Dennis himself or anyone else would like to comment on this, please send an *Email to the Editor*, and it will most likely be published. As for the two Joans, this is what came to my mind: It certainly fits the theme of an "all-programs" stack (disregarding preps) to take special care of programs, so that they won't ever get hurt. In that way, the stack does have protection cards, if only for its biggest asset— programs.

Interview with Byron Bailey

by Jens Kreutzer
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Byron Bailey, **Netrunner** World Champion 1999, was kind enough to answer a few questions I emailed to him. In this interview, he talks about himself, the World Championship, **Netrunner** *Classic*, and more.

Please tell our readers something about yourself.
Byron: I'm a 24-year-old, single, self-employed Web designer and CGI programmer. I'm working on improving my C++ and Java skills to feel more confident about seeking employment as a full-time programmer. I have strong interests in music, mathematics, and computer programming.
*How did it come about that you started playing **Netrunner**? What initially fascinated you about it?*
Byron: Eric Kennedy and I used to play **Magic** occasionally. I was a regular in the Sealed/Draft **Magic** tournaments. I shied away from Constructed, though, as the time investment to build and test a deck is steep. We didn't start playing **Netrunner** until the game had been out about five to six months (when starters where cheap). At first, we weren't impressed too much with the game; it felt very luck-oriented (e. g., Runners' random chance of hitting agendas). Some of the concepts of the game were very exciting though: the idea that both players are trying to obtain special cards (agendas) in the Corp's deck, and just the fact that it was an asymmetrical game. Unfortunately, we missed the rule about ice installation costs, so, as you can imagine, Corp forts became extremely deep. Eric and I only had a double starter and a few boosters each and we didn't know anyone else who played, so we traded with each other. One night Eric was excited about this card he had called "Broker"; he explained to me how you could build up bits on it and then take them off all at once—he wouldn't trade it, of course. **Netrunner** seemed more appealing to me once I started thinking of accessing cards in terms of statistics: i. e., if you access 18 to 20 of the Corp's cards, you have a good chance of winning. Seeing the larger pool of cards and realizing that the Runner had cards like Mouse and Tech Lover to save bits helped increase my interest, too. We heard about a Sealed **Netrunner** tournament at the WotC Game Center and thought it would be fun. Eric won the tourney (including one game where he advanced a Project Babylon 15 times!). At this tourney we met Robert Kleemann. We talked to Robert after the tournament. He thought it would be a good idea to form a weekly play group. So he took down the e-mails of the local players there. For about the next two years the three of us, Jennifer, and a few less regular players met once a week and had tournaments monthly. The Game Center regulations about allowing casual game players in there on weekdays changed Feb. '99, so we haven't been meeting once a week anymore, but we still have monthly tournaments. My favorite aspect of NR is how the Sealed-Deck game plays subtly for many turns with both players trying to get an insight into what their opponent is planning. The Corp attempts to get the Runner to tip his/her hand to see what 'breakers and surprise cards he/she is holding. The Runner makes token runs, paying close attention to how the Corp reacts and any cards he or she may access. Then, in a single turn, the Corp throws down an agenda and *boom*!, the next four actions the Runner takes become critical to the outcome of the game.
Would you have thought beforehand that you had a chance to snatch the title of World Champion '99?
Byron: I just saw it as an opportunity to meet and play new players. It was a great experience. To meet people from the other side of the globe and find out they have the same love and respect for this game is a good feeling. It's amazing how much work Lukas put into it to make this happen.
What decks did you play in the Finals Constructed tourney? Did you change decks between rounds, or did you use the same decks in all three rounds?
Byron: I thought it was Limited Constructed in the first round, so I played a TagMe/Priority Wreck/Sync Attack Runner stack and an ASD/Corp War Corp deck. After that I played Psycho Tycho and Precision Bribery, with minor changes made to both between rounds 2 and 3.
Any comments on what it takes to win with these decks?
Byron: It takes very little to win with them. They have a low demand on runtime skills. Unfortunately, they're probably the best decks. Unlimited Constructed is a poor format. I don't even own enough Time to Collects to make a Precision Bribery deck.
Was there any concern on your side as to whether playing "cheesy" (whatever this means) decks in the World Championship was to be avoided? Or is this issue moot, since it is only important to win, not how this is achieved?
Byron: If I had known that my first two opponents were not going to play degenerate decks, I wouldn't have played those decks. I didn't choose them because I wanted to win with them, but because I didn't want to be hopelessly crushed by someone else playing degenerate decks. It's difficult to determine what the game breaking ("cheesy") decks are; the Nasty Code Gate deck would be called degenerate by some players, while others would say it was an interesting deck. Obviously, the decks David Bartholow and I played would classify as broken.
Would you recommend that next year's WD be held under the new "Restricted" format?
Byron: Definitely! Or maybe a more experimental format.
On to the Sealed matches in the Finals round: Do you recall any interesting, spectacular happenings, or remarkably good or bad luck during your games?
Byron: In the last round vs. Philip Harvey I had a hand size of 0 and 6 agenda points. Philip installed and advanced a card behind an unrezzed piece of ice. He had 10 bits in his pool and I was 1 bit shy of being able to break one sub of a strength-5 Sentry (with Raptor, I think). So the plan was to draw two cards, gain a bit and run on the fort. That way if it was Code Corpse, I could take the 2 brain damage and score the final agenda before the end-of-turn -2 hand size killed me. The first card I drew was Loan from Chiba, making the decision simple.
Do you have any favorite strategy/tactics maxims that you find useful in Sealed play?
Byron: Well, my Runner game kept evolving until it is what it is today (and hopefully will keep improving). It's gone through about three major changes since I started playing. The best strategy is one of constant growth and change. If after every game you ask yourself why you won or lost and look at what you could have done differently, your game should start to improve. If your answer to why you lost is "I didn't draw my [card]" or "s/he had a [card]", you're not looking deep enough, and your game won't improve as quickly. I don't subscribe to the "three stages" view of the game that many NR players have talked about. My biggest complaint is about people who feel that you need to have a lot of bitgaining cards to have success as the Runner ("Broker syndrome"). When a Runner says, "I didn't draw any bitgaining cards", what they're really saying is "I drew too many cards". For the Corp, understanding fortress architecture is important, and being able to determine when the Runner is a threat is the key.

Did you feel that U.S. and European players had a different style of playing NR during the Finals? Since they normally don't have a chance to play against one another, a difference in bluffing behavior, risk calculation, or the like, might not be too surprising. What, if any, were your observations?

Byron: I only played against four different players during WD. Ocke is from Kiel, Germany; Pip's from England, so they probably don't get a chance to play each other much, either. Scott and David are both from Colorado (U.S.), which geographically is a long way from me, so I don't have much experience with them. Scott Dickie was the only player I'd played before, and we only played half a game after a tournament. If I remember correctly, most of my opponents were pretty persistent against R&D as Runner (in Sealed), which is different from my play style.

Do you have a favorite NR card?

Byron: I sing the praises of Asp everywhere I go. It's one of the most undervalued ice cards.

The number one hot topic at the time are of course the new cards from the Classic *expansion. Are there any comments you would like to make?*

Byron: We all owe Jennifer much thanks for standing up for **Netrunner** players at WotC. If it weren't for her, we probably would not have had this expansion. We had about 26 players at our prerelease; many of them didn't know that there was any sort of NR group in the Seattle area (the prerelease was much better advertised than most other tournaments). The night before the tournament I felt like it was Christmas Eve and I was 7 years old. Oh, and to see the NR-L the next Monday with 51 posts. Wow!

Hmm (chuckle), the bit about Christmas Eve—that's just how I felt, too. Now, in what ways will NR Classic *probably influence the Constructed environment? Any educated guesses?*

Byron: Rent-I-Con will see lots of play. I think I'm going to build a Puzzle deck.

Are you satisfied with what the new expansion finally turned out to be like?

Byron: The new art is beautiful. I like the new hidden resources, but (for Sealed) with only two of them, they're not very "hidden". I don't feel we can complain about it after years of no support. The name of the set is misleading for new players. It has a different feel for Sealed deck. With four boosters and 32 cards of a 52 cards set, players get many doubles (I'm not saying it's bad, just different). Almost every common is strong enough to play for Sealed, so players have a similar selection of cards. Also the rares are more like uncommons, so I don't see any card from the set being difficult to obtain.

If WotC were to publish another expansion for NR after NR Classic*, when would be the earliest time you'd like to see it published?*

Byron: *Classic* was published as the most interesting and powerful cards from *Silent Impact*. So the remaining cards from SI would not make a good expansion. If WotC was to make another expansion, they would have to do R&D work first. Unless the **Netrunner** player base increases, I don't think there will be one. Hopefully *Classic* will help bring old players back to the game. One expansion a year would be pretty nice.

Yes, I agree. About one expansion a year is what players can healthily handle, not more. Thank you very much for the interview, Byron, and have a good Christmas and safe New Year, everybody.

Did You Know?

Bits and Pieces from the NR Trivia Collection

#5: Livewire's Contacts & The Short Circuit

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Two staple cards for the Runner, Livewire's Contacts as the most basic bitgainer and The Short Circuit as a widely-used program fetcher, hail directly from the roleplaying game **Cyberpunk 2020**, which is the background to the **Netrunner** world. The character Livewire is described in the **Cyberpunk** rulebook, version 2.01, pg. 222:

"Livewire is a [n]etrunner who used to be associated with a solo team known as the *Devil's Horde*, until the team disbanded in 2011 due to a mishap in an operation that killed off everyone except Livewire and one other member. These days Livewire can usually be found in a small shop that he runs out of the back of The Short Circuit, a local bar. It is said that he has access to any program for the right price; and if he doesn't have it, he will make it."

So, as can also be gleaned from the artwork on the card, The Short Circuit is a bar, and the scene depicted on Livewire's Contacts and described in its flavor text might well be right inside it. Livewire is also referred to in the cyberpunk novel *Bad Voltage* by Jonathon Littell.

Situated next to Night City's Trauma Team™ Tower, the Barbican Building houses The Short Circuit, as the **Cyberpunk** Night City Sourcebook, p. 117, informs us:

"This black edifice [i. e., the Barbican Building] contains the main offices of Argus Inc., a company specializing in netrunner software. Argus, which is owned by Livewire, has been focusing lately on developing applications for the many local medical facilities. Well regarded among the netrunner community, Argus programs are considered to be some of the most reliable commercial products on the market. The Short Circuit is a bar set on top of the Argus offices. Favoured by many of the city's netrunners and techies, it is highly useful for people looking for help in those areas. The bar's other interesting feature is its rotating floor, which allows patrons to see a panoramic view of the [Night] City below. Although there has been a lot of Corporate interest in the bar, Livewire has forbidden recruiting there because he's had problems with corporations and no longer trusts them (or the people who associate with them). Rough, street-hired bouncers make sure no one exceeds the dress code. In addition to normal booths, there are booths with interface jacks which allow netrunners access to an area in netspace where the bar is represented. Whether online or not, many netrunners use the bar as a gathering place to exchange news and services."

The French version of this card contains flavour text, translating to: "Enter, enter! Here, you will find everything you're looking for. Illegal programs, authentic proofs, and also virtual parties."